

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 15, 2010

The Honorable Barack Obama
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to respectfully request your prompt nomination of a qualified and capable individual to fill the position of Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom.

As you know, the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-292) established this position to promote the right to religious freedom abroad and recommend appropriate actions to be taken by the U.S. against those nations that infringe upon this right. This individual should have robust foreign policy experience as well as a background in promoting global religious freedom. In addition, it is imperative that this Ambassador report directly to the Secretary of State, as Congress intended, and be included in all interagency discussions concerning religious freedom.

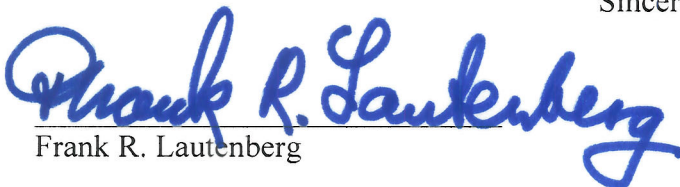
We appreciate the commitment you and your administration have made to promoting religious freedom abroad. As both the U.S. Department of State's 2009 report on International Religious Freedom and the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom clearly indicate, religious repression and violence against religious minorities in many countries around the world has continued to increase. The State Department's report notes that religious freedom "provides an essential foundation for human dignity, robust civil society, and sustainable democracy."

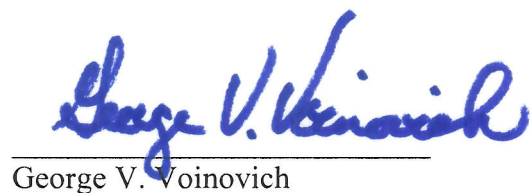
The nomination of an Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom is critical to our public diplomacy and America's image abroad. It will send a strong message about the importance of religious tolerance at a time when a large percentage of the world's population lives in countries with a high amount of religious restrictions.

The U.S. Department of State must have a single individual in charge of coordinating U.S. policy on international religious freedom and acting to counter violence against religious minorities abroad. As such, we urge you to promptly nominate a qualified and capable individual to be Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom and we look forward to considering this nomination in the U.S. Senate.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Frank R. Lautenberg


George V. Voinovich